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ABSTRACT

In Connecticut, the state with the highest per capita income in the country, 110,000 children, or 14.5 percent of the population, live in poverty; 39,000 of these poor children are 5 years of age or younger. Further, 38.5 percent of Black children and 62.3 percent of Hispanic children in Connecticut live in poverty. Poverty and membership in a racial or ethnic minority group are factors identified with children at risk of educational failure and dropping out. The high costs of poor educational outcomes are measurable in the welfare system, the criminal justice system, health care services, and unemployment compensation. Connecticut and the nation must provide all children with a good education in order to compete in the global marketplace. This paper, addressed to Connecticut legislators, presents research findings, interpretations, and analyses supporting the contention that early intervention is highly effective in dropout prevention; poor children at risk of academic failure benefit in the short and long terms from a quality preschool experience. However, among educational initiatives before the Connecticut legislature, preschool programs have minimal support, suggesting shortcomings in political will, long range planning and commitment, and leadership. The paper includes one chart and a list of 10 references. (AF)

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WHICH KIDS MATTER? AND TO WHOM?

Addressed to Connecticut Legislators

by Betsi Shays

Introduction to Management Systems
TA402
Professor Tom Foote
May, 1989

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Abstract

The state with the highest per capita income in the nation has 110,000 children living in poverty. 39,000 of those poor children are five years of age or younger. Poverty and membership in a racial or ethnic minority group are factors identified with children at risk of educational failure ... better known as "dropping out".

Dropping out is a costly proposition: for the dropout and for all of us. The cost of our failures is tallied in the welfare department, the criminal justice system, health care services and unemployment compensation. The taxpayers pick up the tab.

Two decades of research and experience send this message: we know enough to do what needs to be done to make a difference in the lives of these children; that what needs doing is a bargain compared to the cost of our failures; and that not everything needs to change for some things to get better.

Early intervention with a quality preschool experience has been proven to make a significant contribution to turning potential rotten outcomes into success stories... while saving alot of money in the long run.

The kids and their needs are out there.

The ways to help them are out there.

The question is: who's out there for the kids?

"The plain fact is that America has no children to waste."
Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

NEITHER DOES CONNECTICUT!

110,000 Connecticut children live in poverty...that's 14.5% of our population.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?

39,000 of those children living in poverty are under the age of five.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?

35.8% of the black children and 62.3% of the Hispanic children in our state live in poverty.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?

Poverty and membership in a racial or ethnic minority group are factors identified with children at risk of educational failure...better known as "dropping out".

WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?

Of 16,000 unemployed 16-19 year olds, 2,159 are high school graduates and 11,301 are high school dropouts. An additional 8,889 teenagers are high school dropouts not in the labor force."[1]

WHICH KIDS MATTER....AND TO WHOM?

'By the end of the next decade, this country will have either succeeded or failed on the pivotal issue of how to open the doors of opportunity to minority young people. ...If we fail, all other bets are off simply because we will be mired in a system in which the baggage we will have to carry in unproductive human beings, mainly the minorities and disabled, will be too great." Louis Harris
Address to the College Board National Forum
November, 1988

Which kids matter - and to whom?

Who speaks for these kids?

Do YOU?

PROBLEM CONTEXT

Dropouts: Heavy Baggage

We, all of us, pay a price for every high school dropout in Connecticut.

Dropouts are more likely to:

1. receive more welfare and unemployment
2. engage in crime and require involvement with judicial and penal services
3. require higher health care expenditures
4. engage in a lower level of civic participation
5. raise children who tend to follow the same path
6. generate substantially less income
7. be less productive
8. contribute to the lowering of state and national income and tax collection

One researcher sums it up this way: each class of high school dropouts gives up 28 billion dollars in lifetime earnings...and doesn't pay 68 billion in taxes over their lifetime. Each class.

Rotton Outcomes: "At Risk" Factors and Dropping Out

Five "at risk" factors of disadvantage are linked to dropping out:

1. membership in a racial or ethnic group
2. poverty
3. single parent household
4. mother's low level of educational background and

achievement

5. primary language other than English.

Children, especially young children, have no control over the at risk factors in their lives. One factor can present a challenge. But...

> "We now have proof that disastrous outcomes are much more likely when several risk factors interact. This is a critical finding, for it means that rotton outcomes can be changed through action on several fronts. Not everything must be changed for something to be accomplished. ...The prevention of rotton outcomes is not a matter of all or nothing."
>
> Lisbeth Schorr
> Within Our Reach

A Substantial Increase: A Look at the Demographics

Connecticut's children. There are 756,000 of them. 110,000 of our children live in poverty - that's 14.5% ... and 39,000 of these poor children are five and younger.

That should be enough to take your breath away.

But there is more.

A report on Racial, Ethnic Equity and Desegregation in Connecticut Public Schools (January 1988) notes the following:

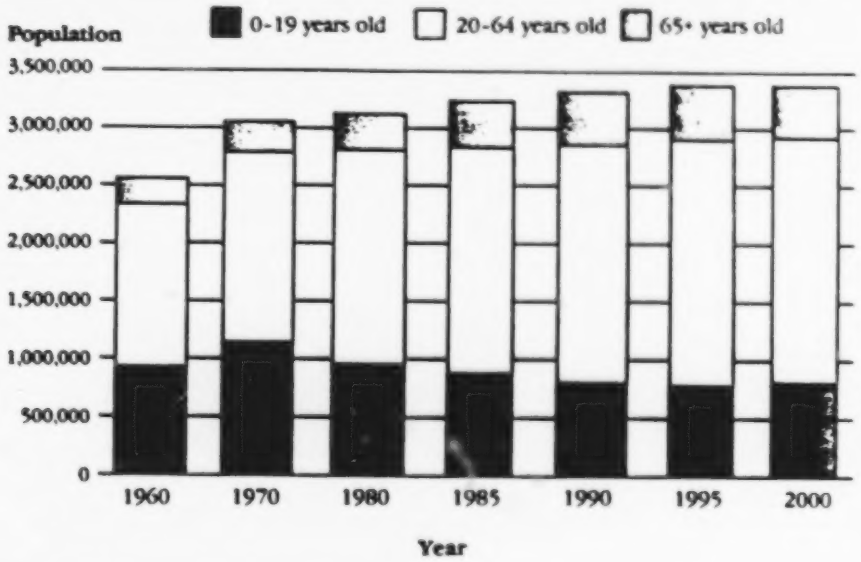
> -minorities in our state currently make up 11% of the population and 21% of the student enrollment
>
> -over 60% of the minority students are concentrated in the five largest urban districts; Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford have an 80%+ minority enrollment

The Connecticut Commission on Children's fall, 1987, report noted the following trends:

> -the under 20 population is expected to decrease by 8.5% between now and the year 2000
>
> -during the same period, the 65 and over population is expected to increase by 21.3%

Figure 1

Connecticut Population Trends, By Specific Age Groups, 1960 to 2000



Source: *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population, Connecticut, Characteristics of the Population, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1985*; Connecticut Department of Health Services estimate, and 1900–2000: Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. *Revised Age and Sex Distributions of Population Projections for Connecticut Municipalities and regions to the Year 2000*. Dec. 1984

Finally, Harold Hodgkinson took a look at Connecticut : The State and Its Educational System. He found:

-although the school age population declined from 1980-1986 by 13.9%, the very young (under five) population increased by 13% during the same years; this very young cohort will be at least 25% minority and probably more

-a declining white population and an increasing minority population

> -every year Connecticut will add about 82,000 jobs- 25,000 of them clerical and service jobs requiring little education or training

Mr. Hodgkinson wonders aloud if Connecticut will continue to stay on top in per capita income as its population ages, demands for health and other services for the elderly increase...against the backdrop of an up and coming group of young, minority children and a tax base coming from an increasing number of minimum wage jobs.

Legislators should be wondering too.

By next year it is estimated 25% of our children will come from minority groups, many of them poor and at risk of educational failure.

Who speaks for these kids?

Human Capital: Can We Afford It? We Have No Choice

> "The Nation's ability to compete is threatened by the inadequate investment in our most important resource: people. Put simply, too many workers lack the skills to perform more demanding jobs. And as the economy comes to depend more and more on women and minorities, we face a massive job of education and training - starting before kindergarten. Can we afford it? We have no choice."
> Business Week cover, September 19, 1988
> "Human Capital: The Decline of America's Workforce"

NYNEX had to test some 60,000 applicants before finding 3000 who were qualified.

Chemical Bank interviewed 40 applicants to find one who could be successfully trained as a teller.

IBM has to teach high school algebra to thousands of workers before they can use multi-million dollar computers.

Burger King has abandoned the use of words on cashier buttons. Instead, there are pictures: of soda , burgers, fries. Think of what that tells you about the quality of some of our workforce.

The Business Week article identifies three forces contributing to the "monumental mismatch between jobs and the ability of Americans to do them":

1. technology is upgrading the work required in most jobs
2. job growth is expected to come from high skill occupations in the service sector
3. sharpened communication skills will be required because of the way work is now organized

Mr. Hodgkinson believes "...the state's work force in year 2000 will be made up of today's Connecticut youth, too many of who are at risk of not fulfilling their potential."

To compete in the global marketplace as a nation and as a state, we will need all our workers to be well-educated.

David Kearns, CEO, Xerox, puts it this way:

> "You'd think it would be abundantly clear, - wouldn't you? - that unless minority youngsters get first class schooling we're going to become a second class economy."

Many of our future workers will be coming from disadvantaged groups. The business community recognizes this. And they are sending a message:

> "Unless society intervenes early in the lives of children in need, the nation will be forced to confront an expanding pool of young people who are equipped neither to learn nor to work. On both economic and humanitarian grounds our nation cannot afford to waste valuable human resources by relegating a significant proportion of its children to the underclass."
>
> Committee for Economic Development
> "Children in Need:
> Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged"

Who's listening?

All of us pay for those who drop out.

The population typically considered at risk of educational failure is growing in Connecticut.

To compete in the global marketplace, our nation, and our state, will need each and every one of our children to be successful, capable and productive.

Which kids matter? And to whom?

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The dropout problem gets a lot of attention. There are dropout prevention teams, dropout prevention counselors, dropout prevention programs, alternative high schools, school and business partnerships and more, much more. Legislation, resources, and a great deal of rhetoric have been

lavished on this problem. Standards have been raised. Excellence has been honored. Teachers have been "empowered". And yet...until recently the dropout rate has remained constant: 25% for the last 25 years. Just days ago the new Secretary of Education announced the new dropout rate: 28%. We are losing ground.

Nearly all the attention, resources, and effort have been directed to the high school level...inspite of the fact that research and experience tells us EARLY INTERVENTION WORKS. Early intervention can outwit predicted rotton outcomes.

What is Connecticut doing to reach children at risk of educational failure early on? What works?

To find out, I've done alot of reading: professional journals, studies, reports, books, and articles.

I've talked with members of the legislature, a member of the State Board of Education, the executive director of the Commission on Children, a couple of veteran lobbyists for the Children's Defense Fund in Washington D.C. and two principals. I wanted to know: do these kids matter? to whom? Does anyone speak for them?

With the same questions in mind, I thumbed and roughly categorized 177 proposed bills sent to the Education Committee and took a hard look at the Department of Education's Budget Brief 1989-1990.

What works?

Which kids matter and to whom?

Some answers follow.

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND ANALYSES

What Works?

> "The more I looked, the clearer it became that in the last two decades we have accumulated a critical mass of information that totally transforms the nation's capacity to improve outcomes for vulnerable children."
>
> "So much more is now known than we are acting on. The lessons of research and experience combine to explode the myth that nothing works. We can do what needs to be done at a price we can afford; prevention is a bargain compared to the current cost of our failures."
>
> Lisbeth Schorr
> Within Our Reach

Believing the job can be done - not just because we want to believe it but because research and experience prove we can - and believing the job must be done because the lives of these children matter is sound public policy for the state of Connecticut.

Early intervention works. It's cost effective. It makes a difference in the lives of 'at risk' children. Many individuals and organizations recognize this. Here's a sampling from a national and state perspective:

> "It would be hard to imagine that society could find a higher yield for a dollar of investment than that found in preschool programs for at risk children."
>
> Lawrence Schweinhart
> Phi Delta Kappan, March 1987.

"The State Board of Education objectives seek to provide early childhood programs for all children and in particular for those students who are handicapped or at risk of developing educational handicaps after birth. Coordination of education, health and other human services will be required to ensure timely and appropriate services to our youngest learners and their families."

Indicators of Success
Connecticut Board of Education, 1988.

"...a growing body of research...demonstrates the value and cost effectiveness of comprehensive programs that provide early intervention and support to families with young children."

Blueprints: Building Comprehensive Early Childhood Services in Connecticut
Commission on Children, August, 1988.

"High quality early childhood programs offer new hope to children at risk. ...since school failure is at the root of many of our social problems, preventing it can benefit society as well as the children involved. The research and experience of the past two decades have given us the knowledge we need to make these programs work. All that we need is the political will to invest the necessary resources to serve all children at risk of school failure and the abiding commitment to do the programs well - with proper staffing, sufficient attention to child and family needs, and a well-implemented child development curriculum."

Lawrence Schweinhart, David Weikart
Educational Leadership, November 1988.

"If we truly wish to assure Connecticut's continuing strength, we must be willing to provide for the needs of our children."

Govenor William O'Neill
1988 Budget Address

Research suggests poor children at risk of academic failure benefit in the short and long term from a quality preschool experience. These children are less likely to need special education, be held back or receive welfare as adults. Lower adolescent pregnancy, delinquency and arrest

rates are noted. These individuals are more likely to graduate from high school, have higher occupational aspirations and expectations.

And if that wasn't good news enough, you get these good outcomes AND SAVE MONEY! One cost benefit analysis puts it this way: for every $1,000 invested in preschool at least $4,130 (after inflation) is returned in reduced costs in special education,welfare, criminal justice and increased tax revenue. A 1984 study found the costs of not operating a high quality, one year early education program for disadvantaged children is 6 times that of providing the service. The Committe for Economic Development considers a quality, one year program an "extraordinary economic buy":

> "It would be hard to imagine that society could could find a higher yield for a dollar of investment than that found in preschool programs for at risk children."

You've heard that before. It's worth repeating. But to be a good investment, the quality of the preschool programs must be high. The necessary components include competent child development professionals, an environment that supports active learning by the child, proper staffing and adequate attention to child and family needs.

Adequate attention to child and family needs. Sometimes, to help the child, you must help the family...it too may be at risk. Successful programs supporting at risk

children and their families have the following attributes:

1. Successful programs are comprehensive and intensive.

2. In successful programs staff have the time, training and skill necessary to build relationships of trust and respect with children and families.

3. Successful programs deal with the child as a part of a family and the family as part of a neighborhood and community.

4. Successful programs cross long-standing professional and bureaucratic boundaries.

These attributes are important. If programs are not successful, they are a waste of resources, both human and economic. Worst of all, lives are wasted.

Which Kids Matter and To Whom? Proposed Bill Survey

Here's a rough sketch of bills submitted to the Education Committee this session, 177 in all:

1. funding for education: 32/177 = 18%
includes equalization, funding for new concepts and studies, state to local district dollars, waivers and endowments

2. teacher/workplace issues: 34/177 = 19%
includes continuing education, retirement collective bargaining, mastery teachers, salary and certification issues

3. funding for repairs and new buildings: 33/177 = 19%

4. higher education issues: 14/177 = 8%

5. special programs: 26/177 = 15%

6. miscellaneous: 22/177 = 12%
athletics, attendance, discipline, health-related issues

7. at risk children: 16/177 = 9%
these proposed bills would include k - 12 students: priority schools, student performance community involvement, school/business partnership, public school choice, magnet schools, work opportunity, full funding for early childhood education in some communities, comprehensive community schools, funds to help students who scored below state standards on the mastery tests, compensatory education programs, task force to study educational issues, extended day kindergarten grants, reimbursement for districts that take at risk students, grants for remedial programs, high school dropout employment programs

8. EARLY intervention for at risk children: 3/177 = 1%
(from the above list) full funding for early childhood education in some communities, comprehensive community schools, extended day kindergarten

The three bills in item #8 indicate an awareness of the need and of what works. However, they died in committee without a hearing. It is understandable in a year of a difficult budget crunch - many good ideas will not be funded. But given what we know about the needs of these children, the costs of their failure to graduate, and the value and solid investment in early intervention programs, one cannot help but wonder if these kids matter much, to anyone.
Which Kids Matter and To Whom? The Budget Brief 1989 -1990

"...the proportion of students who are at risk of educational failure continues to grow at an alarming rate." Thus saith the Budget Brief.

Just how "alarmed" is the state of Connecticut?

As we look at the budget numbers, please keep these numbers in mind:

110,000 (or 14.5%) of Connecticut children live in poverty.

39,000 (or 19.1%) of these children are under the age of five.

35.8% of the black children in our state live in poverty.

62.3% of the Hispanic children live in poverty.

The Budget Brief targets the following programs on the "at risk" population:

1.	adult education	8,456,400
2.	bi-lingual education	2,399,250
3.	birth to three program	294,000
4.	child nutrition	2,217,000
5.	compensatory education	10,430,700
6.	dropout prevention	945,000
7.	extended day kindergarten	1,050,000
8.	primary students at risk	62,700
9.	school breakfast program	531,300
10.	young parents program	256,200
	TOTAL:	26,642,550

This total represents roughly 8% of the Department of Education's overall request. No one would question the potential for these 10 programs to help at risk children. But despite the research, the literature, and the rhetoric about the need and practicality of early intervention, particularly quality preschool programs, the adult education component represents 31% of the request.

The early intervention programs (including birth to three, extended day kindergarten and primary students at risk - totaling $1,406,700- but with no line item for funding preschool programs) represent a mere 5% of a budget section devoted to at risk children.

Which kids matter and to whom?

It gets worse.

Take "Goal V" for example: "To improve and expand early childhood programs." Four programs are listed:

1. extended day kindergarten grant
   to encourage the establishment or expansion of extended day kindergarten 1,050,000

2. birth to age three services
   funds, with interagency support for a second demonstration center to help coordinate programs and services of public and private agencies to support families with severely handicapped and at risk infants and toddlers 294,000

3. young parents program
   assist planning, development, and implementation of education programs for young parents with day care components in school settings 256,200

4. primary students at risk program
   fund model early intervention programs for K - 3 children experiencing school adjustment difficulties 67,200

TOTAL: $1,667,400

Curiously, programs "to improve and expand early childhood programs", once again, do not include preschool education.

But it is more than curious that a state expressing "alarm" over the number of students at risk of educational failure; that a state investing 1.3 billion dollars in education is willing to allocate .001% of its education dollars to improving and expanding early childhood programs. The state with the highest per capita income in the nation, the state with 39,000 poor children five and younger intends to invest $1,667,400 to improve and expand early childhood education programs. THAT'S 12¢ PER DAY, PER CHILD.

Which kids matter? Not our poor and youngest.

And to whom?

What's Missing: Who Speaks for These Kids?

We know we have a need: growing numbers of children at risk of educational failure.

We know enough about what works to make a difference.

We know early intervention is a bargain compared to the costs of our failures.

And yet...when I asked legislators, Department of Education staff, the director of the Commission on Children and a state Board of Education member... "WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?", I was greeted with silence. Teachers? No. Superintendents or boards of education? No. The NAACP or urban legislators? Any legislators? No names were

on the tips of anyone's tongue.

WHY? What's missing?

From conversations with policy makers, it would appear three things are missing:

1. political will
2. a long-range/long-haul approach and commitment
3. LEADERSHIP

The following, selected excerpts from conversations, will illustrate:

<u>Political will is missing</u>.
-politicians are voting to stay in office rather than deal with problems
-this session - bi-partisan hardball and neglect - everyone is thinking about taxes and programs aren't cheap
-new programs require <u>new</u> money...you can't take money away from existing programs
-the lobby group for these kids should be teachers, administrators, and school boards; instead you have teachers interested in salary issues, administrators saying, "Don't ask us to put 13lbs. of stuffing into a 10 lb. turkey", and boards saying,"Just send the money, we know what has to be done."
-we aren't going to do anything for Hartford, we don't get any votes there

<u>A long-range/long-haul approach and commitment is missing</u>
-you're dealing with short range views and short range gains
-it's hardest to sell preventative programs, they are so long term and the political mind is short term
-we partly fund needs, we rarely start with what we need to do the job
-we tend to have "years" - we've done "the year of education" - now let's move on to "the year of solid waste"
-there isn't much of a global view out there
-there are pieces of a long term plan in place but the long haul mentality isn't there, there's no real coordination, no clear definition between various agencies and interests about what needs to be done.

Leadership is missing.
-the urban and minority legislators aren't providing leadership on this issue
-commissions, competent professionals and some groups are getting the message out, but what is lacking is leadership
-national and state polls show children's issues are prominent, that people are willing to pay, but it will require some courageous politician to trust those polls
-the issue of early intervention for at risk children needs more public visibility
-having the governor out front on this issue would make things happen
-the business community can sell the need for early intervention
-you have to have the governor with you

Who speaks for these kids?

No one, really.

No one is there, day in and day out, pressing their case, addressing their needs, making sure you don't forget them...and the high costs of failing them.

No one.

CONCLUSIONS,POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Preferences for Policies We Ought to Prefer

You're a policy maker.

Helping citizens improve their preferences for policies they ought to prefer is part of your job.

Don't you think -

•Connecticut ought to prefer that 'at risk' children get a fair start in life?

•Connecticut ought to prefer that all citizens of our state receive an education that strengthens their ability to be self-sufficient, productive, and proud?

• Connecticut ought to be outraged that nearly 36% of the black children and 62% of the Hispanic children in our state live in poverty?

• Connecticut ought to find it incomprehensible that a state with our wealth and resources tolerates 14.5% of its children to live in poverty ... and that 39,000 of those children are under the age of five?

• Connecticut ought to be aware of the many personal, social and economic costs of dropping out?

• Connecticut ought to realize: we all pay for our failure to address the needs of at risk children? ... that we are all "at risk" when the needs of large and growing numbers of our population aren't priorities?

• Connecticut citizens ought to to feel saddened, that despite official "alarm" over growing proportion of students at risk of educational failure, the education budget proposes an investment of .001% of a 1.3 billion dollar request in the area it would do the most good: early childhood education programs? 12¢ a day, per child.

• Connecticut ought to prefer early intervention in the lives of at risk children because it works, it's cost effective...,and because we need each and every one of these children to be all he or she can be?

Aren't these policies we ought to prefer?

Making Government Do What is Right

Making government do what is right brought many of you to Hartford. Making government do what is right has kept many of you there. You have fought for things you believed were right, sometimes year after year.

There are 110,000 Connecticut citizens living in poverty...they happen to be kids. And they need someone to fight for them.

There are 39,000 of those kids who are poor and five years or younger. They need someone to fight for them and make government do what is right.

Quality preschool programs for all 39,000 of thsee young children is right. It's an idea worth fighting for.

Which kids matter? They all do.

To whom? To all of us.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THESE KIDS?

Will YOU?

If You'd Like to Learn More About Early Intervention for At Risk Children....

Lisbeth Schorr, Within Our Reach (Doubleday, 1988).

Lawrence Schweinhart, Jeffrey Koshel, and Anne Bridgmann, "Policy Options for Preschool Programs," Phi Delta Kappan

Lawrence Schweinhart and David Weikart, "Early Childhood Development Programs: A Public Investment Opportunity," Educational Leadership, November 1988, volume 44, #3

Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged (Committee for Economic Development)

Harold Hodgkinson, "Connecticut: The State and Its Educational System," May 1988.

"Human Capital: The Decline of America's Work Force." Business Week, September 19,1988.

"Educating the Class of 2001: An Agenda for Education," (Addresses to the College Board National Forum, November 1988, Washington, D.C.).

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Blueprints: Building Comprehensive Early Childhood Services in Connecticut,(Commission on Children), August 1, 1988.